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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

DEC 27 1985

Third World Working Group on  
Disarmament and Peace  
c/o Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign  
220 I Street, N.E., Suite 130  
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Concerned Americans:

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I am replying to your November 15 letter to President Reagan regarding his November 19-20 summit meeting in Geneva with Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev. We appreciate your comments as we move forward in our efforts to build the foundation for a more stable and constructive relationship with the Soviet Union.

The basis for this summit was set by the firm and realistic policies the President has pursued toward the Soviet Union. For 40 years, the behavior of the Soviet Union has complicated our hopes for peace and the growth of freedom. Through the reestablishment of our political, economic, and military strength and the reinvigoration of our alliances, we were able to establish a dialogue with the Soviet Union based on realism and strength.

The President called for a fresh start in U.S.-Soviet relations. We have now made that start. In Geneva, the two leaders had an intensive and frank examination of all the issues on our basic four-part agenda: arms control, regional issues, human rights, and bilateral questions. Each made clear where he stands and discussed areas of mistrust and suspicion. The joint statement issued at the end of the meeting frankly recognized that our systems and policies are vastly different. The competitive nature of our relationship will continue.

Nevertheless, President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev agreed they share an overriding responsibility to ensure this competition remains peaceful and to work together to strengthen peace. The two leaders also agreed to meet again and to set up a regular process of summit meetings, in addition to meetings of senior officials of both countries. This new high-level dialogue will provide a framework for intensifying discussions and solving problems.

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The meetings in Geneva were characterized by a great deal of give-and-take. On arms control, the President reaffirmed his commitment to securing deep and stabilizing reductions in offensive systems. At the same time, he outlined his goal of moving deterrence toward a greater reliance on defense and away from the threat of nuclear retaliation. The purpose of the Strategic Defense Initiative is to determine whether strategic defenses are feasible. The President made clear the United States was not prepared to restrict research legal under the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

We were pleased that the two sides were able to agree on a number of important points relating to arms control in the joint statement:

--In the Geneva Nuclear and Space Talks, both sides agreed to the principle of 50 percent reductions in nuclear arms and an interim agreement on intermediate-range nuclear forces.

--We agreed to study the feasibility of risk reduction centers.

--We agreed to enhanced cooperation in support of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

--Both sides endorsed the concept of an effective and verifiable ban on chemical weapons and agreed to experts' meetings on preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons.

--We emphasized the importance of achieving positive results at the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) talks in Vienna.

--Both sides reaffirmed the need for a document at the Stockholm Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe which would include mutually acceptable confidence and security building measures and give concrete expression to the principle of non-use of force.

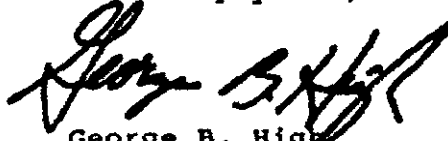
With regard to human rights, the President stressed to Mr. Gorbachev that respect for the individual and the rule of law is as fundamental to peace as arms control. He pressed for greater Soviet adherence to international agreements, such as the Helsinki Final Act. The Soviets agreed in the joint statement to the importance of resolving humanitarian cases in a cooperative spirit.

On regional issues, the President stressed that in addition to seeking a safer and more stable strategic environment, the United States and the Soviet Union need to work together to end dangerous regional conflicts. The President raised the Soviet Union's continuing intervention, both directly and through proxies, in Afghanistan, Angola, Central America, and Cambodia. He urged an intensified consultative process on regional conflicts. Both sides agreed to regularize the process of discussions by experts of both sides and at the foreign minister level.

In bilateral relations, President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev agreed on the utility of broadening exchanges and strengthening people-to-people contacts. In this connection, Secretary of State Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze signed a new exchanges agreement in Geneva. The two leaders also reviewed progress in a number of other bilateral areas, including the civil aviation agreement, our new agreement on air safety in the Northern Pacific, expanded people-to-people exchanges, and the opening of new consulates in Kiev and New York. Although these steps are modest, we believe they demonstrate we can work together to resolve problems to our mutual benefit.

Perhaps the most important result of the Geneva meeting was that it allowed both leaders to discuss their differences in a candid and private setting. As the President said at the conclusion of the meeting, the talks also provided an opportunity to explore common concerns in all four areas of our relationship. Where there are differences, we believe they are now better understood. Where shared concerns exist, there is now a more solid foundation for dealing with them. In the end, both leaders agreed that real confidence must be built on deeds, not just words. The Geneva meeting was a very worthwhile beginning to what we hope will be a productive process of resolving problems through concrete action.

Sincerely yours,



George B. High  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Public Affairs